

Town of Clarence General Tax rate to fall-again-in 2015.

On November 5th, 2015 the Clarence Town Board voted to lower the General Fund tax rate-again-for the third year in a row. The General Fund tax rate has fallen from \$1.046 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2012 to \$1.03 in 2015, making Clarence one of the lowest taxed jurisdictions in Western New York. How is it that other municipalities are forced to raise taxes ever year, but we are able to keep ours low? The number one reason that we are able to keep our taxes low is that we do not have a paid, full-time police or fire department. A full time police department would cost the town between 35-45% of its annual budget. Our budget for 2015 is \$22,745,963, so a police department would cost the Town of Clarence seven million to nine million dollars every year, and a paid fire department would cost much more than we are currently paying our volunteers. The Town of Clarence has recently entered into a contract with the New York State Police, and the Troopers will be building their barracks next to Town Hall. Not only will the Troopers be paying the Town of Clarence rent, but the Town of Clarence will own the building after twenty years. The contract we agreed to is for twenty years with a second renewable term of twenty years. In fact, it could be another forty years before the Town of Clarence has to think about starting their own police force. There are many towns in New York that have over 500,000 citizens who use the County Sherriff, and I truly hope that we continue to one of those towns in the future. Another reason that our taxes are lower than many of the other towns is that our current infrastructure (roads and sewers) are in excellent shape. While there was Federal and State grants available to pay for sewers many years ago, these funds have dried up, and the taxpayers of Erie County will have to pay the bulk of those costs themselves. Roads and sewers don't seem to be a big issue, but if you talk to someone from Tonawanda, where the sewers will cost citizens many millions of dollars over the next several years to repair and replace, you will see that infrastructure is a HUGE financial issue for local taxpayers. The last, and most important piece of the puzzle is vigilant department heads and a dedicated Town Board that-together-are always watching their costs. Town of Clarence taxpayers can sleep easy knowing that, with the Town Board guiding the process, Department heads and their employees are always trying to find a better, faster, more efficient way to accomplish their work. This savings is passed along directly to you in the form of lower taxes. During my first term in office we were able to cut the General Tax rate three years in a row, and with your help and support, we will continue to cut **your** tax rate-again-in 2016.

Should you have any questions, comments or suggestions for future articles, please feel free to call, email dhartzell@clarence.ny.us or stop by the Supervisors office in Town Hall. My door is always open!